Annual Report of the Chairman of the Anglo-Belarusian Society for 2014–2015

BY

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The year presented a number of opportunities for members and friends to get together to enjoy the language, history and culture of Belarus in a range of events which were variously academic, fun, serious and light-hearted, but all warming and enlightening.

The Annual General Meeting in Marian House on **1 February** was the first formal event of the year. It began with Jim Dingley in the chair until I took over from him as Chairman following the election of a new Council. I said I would try to clarify the purpose of the Society, strengthen the role of the Council in running it, and widen the membership. The AGM was followed by an interesting talk by Fr. Siarhiej Surynovič from Northern Belarus on "Bible translations into Belarusian in the 20th century."

On **8 March** we held Mother Language Day, well established as one of the three major events in the ABS calendar (the others being Kupallie and Kaliady/Batlejka), though this year the turnout was rather low (there was much else going on elsewhere).

The highlight of the year was a conference on **27–29 March** at UCL, Riding House Street, to mark the 150th anniversary of the death of Kastuś Kalinoŭski in 1864. Speakers and participants came from Belarus, Poland, Lithuania as well as the UK. It took an enormous amount of preparation in partnership with UCL, the Association of Belarusians in Great Britain, the Francis Skaryna Belarusian Library and Museum, the Belarusian Catholic Mission, the Embassy of the Republic of Lithuania in the UK, the Journal of Belarusian Studies, Belarus Digest, the Centre for Transition Studies (now known as the Ostrogorski Centre) and the Professional Union of Belarusians in Britain. Our special thanks for their contribution go to Jim Dingley, Karalina Mackievič, Aliena Edwards and Yarik Kryvoi.

2014 marked the 60th anniversary of the Anglo-Belarusian Society. Although a number of events, including the Kalinoŭski Conference, coincided with it, the

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main anniversary event was on **17 May** at the Ukrainian Institute in Holland Park: a talk by Bruce Bucknell, HM Ambassador to Belarus, followed by a talk by Jim Dingley on the history of the Society.

Kupallie was celebrated on **21 June** in the garden of 39 Holden Road. It was a lively event organised by Karalina Mackievič and included a traditional Belarusian bagpiper Jaŭhien Baryšnikaŭ.

Kaliady and Batlejka were marked by Paviel Šaŭcoŭ and Saša Bielavokaja on **20 December** at Marian House in partnership with St Cyril's Sunday School.